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E104

ACTION WHA-00

RELEASED IN PART  
B1, 1.4(B), 1.4(D)

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DODE-00
	DOEE-00	PERC-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	EUR-00	VC-00
	H-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	L-00	VCE-00	AC-00
	NSAE-00	OIC-00	NIMA-00	PA-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00
	FMPC-00	SP-00	STR-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00
	DRL-00	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/000W		

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O 262154Z MAY 04  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6450  
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY LISBON PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY  
NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
USCINCSO MIAMI FL PRIORITY  
USINT HAVANA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 001799

NSC FOR CBARTON  
USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD  
STATE PASS USAID FOR DCHA/OTI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/25/2014  
TAGS: PGOV, PHUM, KDEM, OAS, VE  
SUBJECT: VENEZUELA: PRESIDENTIAL SIGNATURE APPEALS UPDATE

REF: A. CARACAS 01769  
B. CARACAS 01748  
C. CARACAS 01730

Classified By: A/DCM Abelardo A. Arias for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

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Summary  
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1. (C) The signature appeals process for the recall referendum against President Hugo Chavez will begin May 27, with 2,659 centers opening to the public May 28-30. The pro-Chavez campaign committee Comando Ayacucho formally

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
REVIEW AUTHORITY: ALAN H FLANIGAN  
CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(B), 1.4(D)  
DECLASSIFY AFTER: 6 JUN 2027  
DATE/CASE ID: 13 MAR 2007 200503244

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requested the National Electoral Council (CNE) remove OAS Chief Observer Fernando Jaramillo for alleged bias in favor of the opposition. The CNE prohibited the set up of information centers near appeals sites May 25, but pro-opposition CNE Director Ezequiel Zamora clarified subsequently that the information centers may operate in "closed areas" or political party offices. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The Coordinadora Democratica (CD) claims it has made contact with 75 percent of persons eligible to appeal. End summary.

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Chavez Supporters Call For Removal of OAS Observer  
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2. (U) On May 26, the day before start of the presidential signature appeals process (which will open to the public May 28-30), the pro-Chavez campaign committee Comando Ayacucho formally requested that the National Electoral Council (CNE) demand the removal of OAS chief observer Fernando Jaramillo for allegedly favoring the opposition. Ayacucho Coordinator Ismael Garcia cited Jaramillo's comments to reporters during the May 21-23 appeals for deputies that "fewer people had turned out than expected" as evidence of bias. Former Minister of Infrastructure Diosdado Cabello said Jaramillo had intervened in Venezuelan electoral issues so often that Jaramillo had lost all validity as an impartial observer. Cabello reiterated that the CNE is the only legitimate electoral authority and that quick counts carried out by international observers are not valid. Garcia also said Venezuelan OAS Ambassador Jorge Valero would shortly present a formal complaint to OAS SYG Gavia requesting Jaramillo's removal.

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Information Centers Prohibited, Maybe  
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3. (U) CNE Director Oscar Battaglini (pro-GOV) announced May 25 that the CNE had prohibited information centers (sites operated by the Coordinadora and Comando Ayacucho near the appeals centers to give logistical support and allow citizens to check the status of their signatures). On May 24, CNE Director Jorge Rodriguez had announced that such centers must be located at least 150 meters away from the appeals center. Battaglini said the CNE acted on intelligence supplied by the military that the centers could lead to disruptions in public order. Twenty minutes after Battaglini's comments, CNE Director Ezequiel Zamora (pro-opposition) told reporters the

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board had not/not banned information centers if they are located within an enclosed area, such as a private house or political party campaign office. The official CNE press release affirmed the ban and did not mention Zamora's interpretation.

### ----- Opposition Continues to Prepare -----

4. (C) Miranda State Governor Enrique Mendoza announced that the Coordinadora Democratica (CD) would proceed with plans to establish the centers. Opposition appeals preparations proceeded normally on May 26, including a simulation of the appeals process staged in Caracas' Chacao municipality to

familiarize volunteers with the mechanics of the process. A [REDACTED] that organization for this round of the referendum process is better than ever before. He claimed the opposition had contacted 75 percent of the 1.19 million persons with right to appeal, with higher percentages in key areas such as Zulia state. Opposition groups in Anzoategui State signed a unity pact May 25 to consolidate forces in support of the appeals, as did political groups in the Sucre municipality of Caracas on May 26.

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### ----- GOV Harassment Continues -----

5. (U) GOV prosecutors continue to press legal actions against well-known Chavez opponents. A judge granted Sumate directors Alejandro Plaz and Maria Corina Machado, charged with treason for accepting a grant from the National Endowment for Democracy, access to their case files. They are now scheduled to appear June 2 for indictment and possible detention. A judge sentenced journalist Ibeyise Pacheco to nine months in prison for defaming a military officer after she accused him of corruption in 2002. Pacheco, who remains free, told reporters she would appeal the decision. Authorities also detained retired Gen. Francisco Uson May 22. He faces charges of defaming the armed forces. At the time of his detention, Uson was working with the Coordinadora on logistics for the appeals in Bolivar State.

6. (C) Allegations persist of dismissal of public employees who signed against Chavez and threats against recipients of public welfare programs. [REDACTED]

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GOV Announces Intelligence Operation  
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7. (U) Vice Minister of Interior and Justice Carlos Betioli announced May 26 that the GOV will mount a special intelligence operation to prevent "anarchic groups" from disrupting public order during the appeals process. He refused to give names, but said several individuals with a history of plotting were under suspicion. Mayor of Metropolitan Caracas Alfredo Pena said May 26 2,600 Metropolitan Police will patrol Caracas to maintain public order. The GOV plans to mount an open street market ("megamercado") in downtown Caracas during the appeals process, according to press reports.

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Comment  
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